

**IN THE SPECIFICATION:**

Please replace paragraph [0028] with the following amended paragraph:

[0028] In contrast to the prior art use of a  $\text{Cl}_2$  main etchant; an aspect of the present invention is use of  $\text{HCl}$  as a main etchant.  $\text{HCl}$  plasma comprises hydrogen and chlorine ions and radicals, which dissociation is different from that of  $\text{Cl}_2$ . While not wishing to be bound by theory, it is believed that hydrogen is a reduction agent that helps convert unused or excess chlorine, as well as chloride by-products, to  $\text{HCl}$  gas. This results in less corrosive by-products disposed on one or more surfaces of etched MTJ stacks, as compared with  $\text{Cl}_2$  plasma, as  $\text{HCl}$  gas may be pumped out of a chamber. Moreover, MTJ stack to resist mask selectivity with  $\text{HCl}$  plasma is better than that of  $\text{Cl}_2$  plasma, so a single-mask layer of photoresist is more feasible for etching an entire MTJ stack 120.  $\text{HCl}$  may be used with additive gases such as  $\text{CO}$ ,  $\text{N}_2$ , or  $\text{Ar}$  to enhance MTJ stack to mask selectivity when mask material such as silicon oxide and the like is used. Notably, another hydrogen halide, such as  $\text{HBr}$ , may be used as an etchant gas in addition to  $\text{HCl}$ .